TL 6035

Dili, 11th of December 1999
Mr. Sergio De Melo
Special Representative of the UN Secretary General
UNTAET

And

Mr. Kay Rala Xanana Gusmao
The President of the National Council of Timorese Resistance
CNRT

Dear Sirs,

We would like to bring to your immediate attention the following issues affecting the people and the future of East Timor:

1. **Insufficient food and the rising malnutrition especially in children and the elderly.**

   Recent figures released by NGOs running health clinics in East Timor shows that between 18% to 20% of children are malnourished and at risk of disease and death as the result. Total food aid in East Timor will only reach one third of population. What about the rest of the people? Is it the intention of the international community to let two thirds of the East Timorese die of starvation and malnutrition? What will we feed our families when the first rice received is finished? Why is food distribution reduced or stopped at least 5 months before the local crops are available?

   We acknowledge the food distributions done by the NGOs however, we are appalled that food for the East Timorese means only one third of the population will actually receive rice supplemented by some beans and oil. Some of the food distributed was out of date and unaceptable in other countries. Recent repatriates have not received sufficiente rice or other goods as part of their resettlement needs.

   What do we feed our babies and young children whom can not eat solids? Why are the refugees at the Don Bosco Centre who have to sometimes wait for days, not provided with a cooked meal and milk for the children at least once a day? Lack of cooked food and proper facilities including round the clock medical services at Don Bosco have contributed to the death of at least one sick child and will continue if conditions do not change. Considering the amount of money being donated to East Timor and the amount of NGOs providing aid, why is this happening? The foreigners go home after work to a comfortable bed and a meal with large quantities of meat and vegetables, the floating hotel is a classic example, but the same can not be said for the East Timorese. Our children often spend the day going through the rubish to look for leftover food from the cans of beef and fish consumed by the foreigners. Other alternative is to go to the sewrage canals and pick kanko or cacht ells to eat.

2. **The presence of foreign business in East Timor without permission and consultation with the people of East Timor.**

We are appalled at the presence of several foreign businesses in our country without permission and consultation with the people of East Timor. These businesses are employing local Timorese at 20.000Rhp a day while making a profit of around $25.000 Aus a day and up to one million per month tax-free.

The business carried out by these foreigners includes prostitution (visibly seen in Hotel Dili and Dili Lodge), drugs, alcohol and padeophilia. The women are brought in from Indonesia, Australia and others are young East Timorese women enticed by the quick made money, lack of employment and poverty. The problems are compounded by the low income set by UNAMET, lack of opportunities for business and decent paid jobs. There are also long term health problems like AIDS and STD (sexually transmitted disease) and other social problems. In future these problems will have a high cost for the people of East Timor with no real solutions as seen in other countries.

These businesses are not only taking advantage of our people and the situation in our country but also did not contribute for the independence of East Timor. In fact some were and are partners or have connections with Indonesian military and other government officials responsible for the killings and destruction in our country. We understand that some are involved in distribution of toys and other goods for Christmas (Thrifty and others) however it does not give them the rights to or buy legitimacy for business in our country. We fought for our independence and reserve the rights for the ownership of all the businesses and contracts in Timor Loro Sae.

The excuses "we are employing local Timorese" or "helping to start the economy" amongst others, does not justify the taken over of the business opportunities in East Timor. East Timor belongs to the people of East Timor and all the businesses must be for the East Timorese

Many foreigners are forming partnerships with the Timorese in the hope to formerly own business and property in East Timor. While others use it to make their presence here more acpectable or to make it look like they are helping the Timorese people. East Timor is only half of an Island, if this continues we will lose our country to foreign ownership.

This is the continuos exploitation of the people of East Timor and our present vulnerability, adding to the genocide and the destruction of our culture and society. This tragedy is happening under the eyes and the administration of UNTAET.

3. **The rights of the Timorese to fair and equal employment, conditions and appropriate pay.**

Timorese workers are paid a minimum salary of 20.000 Rhps a day to work a minimum of 9 to 12 hours a day in very bad conditions. What was the base for UNAMET to set these wages? Was consideration given to the bad living conditions and the necessities of the people of East Timor when setting the minimum wages? How much do the foreign workers earn and what are the conditions?

The general assumption is "20.000 Rhps is better than nothing" and "we are employing local Timorese" or "the Timorese are under skilled".

The approximate number of East Timorese in Dili is 80 to 100 thousand. However only about 3000 to 4000 are actually employed, the majority of employment taken by foreign workers.

These conditions are not only adding to the poverty created by Indonesia and their allies but it's also creating a new class of poor in East Timor under the administration of UNTAET.

4. **The treatment of East Timorese local workers by foreign nationals.**

We are disgusted by the way in which foreigners in east Timor treat our people. Many working in hot and unventilated conditions like warehouses are not provided with proper cold drinking water. They are dismissed if late for work or are dismissed on payday without justification or prior warning. Pay for overtime or rest and recreation leave is unheard of.

Many work without a break and no food because they live far from home and are not given enough time for lunch or can not afford to buy lunch because they have large families to support and earn about $2 Aus a day. The UNTAET restaurant and other foreign businesses is the classic example. The average size of a family is 8 to 10 people (6 to 8 children) to be fed and clothed on 20.000Rhps a day set by UNAMET. Do foreign workers earn and can they live in East Timor earning the wages paid to the Timorese?

Racist and degrading comments are also made amongst foreign workers about the Timorese. Some referring to the Timorese workers as "**servants**" while others are arrogant and conduct themselves in a manner similar to the slave drivers of the 19th century.

There is also a lot of pressure being put on these workers to perform well under difficult conditions and often the foreign workers take the credit with little or no regard for the efforts made by the Timorese workers. Often while the Timorese work, many foreign workers, during work hours are busy conducting or planing how to set

up their own business in our country and how to have access to the next available property for their "quick rich scheme".

We call on UNTAET and CNRT to take action and demand:

1. **The immediate introduction of policies to stop the foreign invasion of our country**

2. **Immediate removal of foreign businesses "carpet beggars", prostitution and drugs from our country, Timor Loro Sae. The urgent introduction of policies to stop foreign ownership of land or properties in East Timor.**

3. **More and urgent food distribution including milk and more protein to all the population, not just one third**

4. **Priority to the Timorese for all businesses, contracts and other opportunities including work. We are the rightful owners of Timor Loro Sae and reserve the right of sole ownership to any businesses or properties. We reserve the right in decision making concerning the presence of foreign investments when appropriate in our country. We demand that all the foreign business be screned by authorities before entering East Timor.**

5. **Equal pay and conditions for the Timorese as those enjoyed by foreign workers**

6. **Respect for our people especially women, our culture, values and beliefs and our rights as people in our country**

7. **The immediate control of customs and immigration to FALINTIL AND CNRT for our ports and airports**

8. **We call on the immediate intervention of FALINTIL FOR LAW AND ORDER IN TIMOR LORO SAE**

9. **Open and transparent accountability of all the money and aid coming into East Timor, the people of East Timor have the right to now the amount of money given in their aid and where the money is being directed. The information to be disseminated through public information forums, meetings and the CNRT.**

10. **The right of full and inclusive participation in decision making regarding all the activities concerning East Timor**

We will not tolerate these injustices any longer and demand the urgent attention of UNTAET and CNRT.

Unless these injustices are resolved soon (seven days upon receiving this letter) we will have no choice but to take matters into our own hands to protect the rights of our people and the future of our country TIMOR LORO SAE.

Yours faithfully,

Ofelia Napoleao

Rev. Arlindo Marcal mobile: 0409889845

Maria Bernardino mobile: 0408090061

Olandina Caeiro Alves

REBUILD WATCH!
BA DIREITO POVO TIMOR LORO SAE